

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 06119 01 OF 02 131835Z

42

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 VO-03 SCA-01 SCS-03 SP-02 L-03 PPT-01

COME-00 /024 W

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R 131745Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6763

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 6119

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, CGEN, CPAS, VE, BR

SUBJECT: VISA REQUIREMENT FOR OVERLAND ENTRY INTO VENEZUELA

SUMMARY. A VISA IS REQUIRED FOR OVERLAND ENTRY INTO VENEZUELA FROM BRAZIL. BECAUSE OF RECENT CHANGES IN POLICIES AND/OR PERSONNEL AT THE VENEZUELAN CONSULATE IN BOA VISTA, NEAR THE BORDER CROSSING, AMERICANS WHO WAIT UNTIL ARRIVING THERE TO APPLY FOR VISAS WILL ENCOUNTER HIGH TELEX CHARGES AND A DELAY OF FROM ONE TO TWO WEEKS OR MORE WHILE CLEARANCE IS OBTAINED FROM CARACAS. MOREOVER, THERE IS A CLEAR POSSIBILITY OF VISA REFUSAL, WHICH WOULD NECESSITATE A 1300-1400 MILE DETOUR TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE ATLANTIC FROM THE INTERIOR OF AMAZONAS. THE DEPARTMENT IS REQUESTED TO GIVE PROMINENT NOTICE IN ITS INFORMATION PROGRAMS FOR TRAVELLERS WHO MIGHT COME THIS WAY AND TO ALERT ALL LATIN AMERICAN POSTS OF THE VISA REQUIREMENT, AS WELL AS OF THE ADVISABILITY OF OBTAINING VISAS EITHER PRIOR TO DEPARTURE FROM THE U.S., OR AT A VENEZUELAN CONSULATE EN ROUTE BEFORE ARRIVAL IN NORTHERN BRAZIL, WHERE ISSUANCE POLICY IS PRESUMABLY MOST STRINGENT. END SUMMARY.

1. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN RECENT MONTHS, THIS EMBASSY HAS BEEN CONTACTED BY AMCIT OVERLAND TRAVELLERS  
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PAGE 02 BRASIL 06119 01 OF 02 131835Z

TEMPORARILY STRANDED IN THE BRAZILIAN TOWN OF BOA VISTA,

LOCATED 1550 MILES NORTHWEST OF BRASILIA NEAR THE BORDER BETWEEN BRAZIL AND VENEZUELA IN THE AMAZON BASIN. TYPICALLY, THE CITIZENS INVOLVED ARE ON THE FINAL LEG OF DRIVING TRIPS THROUGH LATIN AMERICA, WHICH COMMENCED IN MEXICO OR IN VENEZUELA OR COLOMBIA, CONTINUED DOWN THE WEST COAST OF SOUTH AMERICA AND ON INTO ARGENTINA, AND ARE NOW APPROACHING COMPLETION BY TRANSIT THROUGH BRAZIL AND VENEZUELA TO THE CARIBBEAN COAST. UPON ARRIVAL AT THE VENEZUELAN BORDER, THESE TRAVELLERS FIND THEMSELVES DENIED ENTRY FOR LACK OF VISAS. FOR WHILE AMCITS ARE EXEMPT FROM VISAS FOR ENTRY INTO VENEZUELA BY AIR OR SEA (CARRIER-ISSUED TOURIST CARDS SERVE AS AN ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES) ENTRY BY LAND--AT LEAST ALONG THE FRONTIER WITH BRAZIL--REQUIRES A VISA, WHICH IS NO LONGER EASY TO GET.

2. VENEZUELA HAS A CONSULATE IN BOA VISTA, WHICH IS SITUATED NEAR THE PRINCIPAL FRONTIER ENTRY POINT. THE PREVIOUS CONSUL THERE WAS APPARENTLY AN EASY-GOING SORT, WHO FACILITATED ENTRY BY FOREIGNERS, OR AT LEAST BY AMERICANS. HOWEVER, HE LEFT UNDER A CLOUD SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, AND HIS SUCCESSOR IS OF AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ORDER. THE CURRENT INCUMBENT'S OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS, STRICTLY ADHERED TO, ARE TO OBTAIN TELEGRAPHIC CLEARANCE FROM CARACAS PRIOR TO VISA ISSUANCE. THE UNDERLYING PREMISE IS THAT TRAVELLERS SHOULD HAVE OBTAINED VENEZUELAN VISAS IN THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN; THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY HERE CITES THE DESIRE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO ACHIEVE A MEASURE OF OVERSIGHT AS REGARDS ACCESS TO ITS REMOTE HINTERLAND, WHERE SMUGGLING, UNAUTHORIZED EXPLOITATION OF MINERAL DEPOSITS, AND ENTRY BY UNDESIRABLES, ARE MATTERS OF CONCERN.

3. SO FAR, WE KNOW OF NO ONE BEING FLATLY REFUSED ENTRY AT BOA VISTA. HOWEVER, TRAVELLERS ARRIVING WITHOUT VISAS CAN EXPECT HIGH TELEX CHARGES AND A WAIT OF FROM ONE TO TWO WEEKS OR MORE. OF GREATER CONCERN ARE REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM AMERICANS DESCRIBING HIGHLY DISCOURTEOUS BEHAVIOR BY THE VENEZUELAN CONSUL, AT TIMES VERGING ON GLEEFUL ARBITRARINESS. WHILE THE SAMPLING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BRASIL 06119 01 OF 02 131835Z

IS LIMITED, AND SOME OF THE COMPLAINTS NO DOUBT REFLECT FRUSTRATION AT THE WAIT AND EXPENSE, IT IS NONETHELESS TRUE THAT EVEN AN OFFICER OF THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY HERE DESCRIBES THE CONSUL AS VERY MUCH ON HIS DIGNITY AND PERHAPS EXCESSIVELY ZEALOUS IN CARRYING OUT HIS INSTRUCTIONS. THIS BECOMES OF IMPORTANCE WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT, IN PASSING ON CLEARANCE REQUESTS, CARACAS HAS LITTLE TO GO ON ASIDE FROM THEIR CONSUL'S OWN

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOOD OR ILL. MOREOVER, EVEN WERE HE  
ENDOWED WITH THE BEST WILL, THE LATTER HAS LITTLE  
TO GO ON ASIDE FROM THE APPEARANCE OF THE APPLICANT, AND  
PERSONS WHO HAVE JUST TRAVERSED THE AMAZON BASIN TEND TO  
LOOK RATHER BEDRAGGLED.

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 06119 02 OF 02 131843Z

41

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6764

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 6119

4. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, THIS POST HAS SOUGHT THE GOOD  
OFFICES OF THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY IN BRASILIA TO SECURE  
REASONABLY EXPEDITIOUS VISA ISSUANCE IN BOA VISTA. HOWEVER,  
OUR VENEZUELAN COLLEAGUES EMPHASIZE THAT THE CONSUL  
THERE TAKES HIS ORDERS DIRECTLY FROM CARACAS, NOT FROM  
THEM. THUS, A FAVORABLE OUTCOME CANNOT BE GUARANTEED,  
ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE INCREASING SENSITIVITY OF  
THIS DIGNIFIED PERSONAGE TO OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE. THE  
LAST AMERICAN WHO CALLED FROM BOA VISTA SAID HE RECEIVED  
BROAD HINTS THERE THAT WERE HE TO CONTACT THE  
AMERICAN EMBASSY ON BEHALF OF HIS ARGENTINE WIFE (A  
U.S. PERMANENT RESIDENT ALIEN), IT COULD PREJUDICE HIS  
CHANCES OF OBTAINING A VISA FOR EITHER OF THEM.

5. THUS, SOONER OR LATER, EITHER FOR GOOD REASON OR UPON  
A WHIM, SOME AMCIT ARRIVING AT BOA VISTA MAY BE FLATLY  
REFUSED A VISA, OR ELSE FORCED TO WAIT FOR A PROHIBITIVELY  
LONG PERIOD. AT THAT POINT, SADDLED WITH A VEHICLE WHICH  
CANNOT BE SOLD IN BRAZIL, AND FINDING HIMSELF IN A VAST

HINTERLAND SERVED BY ONLY A FEW OVERLAND ROUTES, THE PERSON WILL DISCOVER THAT EVEN HIS BEST ALTERNATIVE TO ENTRY AT BOA VISTA ENTAILS A 1300-1400 MILE DETOUR BY LAND AND RIVERBOAT TO MACAPA OR BELEM, THE NEAREST BRAZILIAN OCEAN PORTS.

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PAGE 02 BRASIL 06119 02 OF 02 131843Z

6. FOR THIS REASON, THE POST URGES THAT IN ITS INFORMATION PROGRAMS AND LITERATURE FOR THE ORIENTATION OF U.S. TRAVELLERS, THE DEPARTMENT GIVE PROMINENT NOTICE TO THE VISA REQUIREMENT FOR OVERLAND ENTRY INTO VENEZUELA, AND THAT IT STRESS THE STRONG ADVISABILITY OF OBTAINING SUCH VISAS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE FROM THE U.S. THIS SEEMS THE MORE PRUDENT GIVEN THE POPULAR (AND IN MOST CASES CORRECT) ASSUMPTION THAT AMCITS DO NOT REQUIRE VISAS (OR CAN OBTAIN THEM EASILY ON THE SPOT) FOR TRAVEL IN LATIN AMERICA. INDEED, THOSE OVERLAND TRAVELLERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE SURPRISE AT THEIR PLIGHT, STATING THAT AT NO OTHER LAND BORDER CROSSING IN THEIR CIRCUIT OF LATIN AMERICA HAD THEY ENCOUNTERED ANY SIGNIFICANT DIFFICULTY.

7. ON THEIR EXTENDED ITINERARIES THROUGH A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES PRIOR TO ARRIVAL IN NORTHERN BRAZIL, MANY--IF NOT MOST OF THESE PEOPLE--WHO MAY NOT BE SO EASILY REACHED BY PUBLICITY IN THE STATES, WILL HAVE OCCASION TO CALL ON U.S. CONSULAR POSTS. THEREFORE, AS A MEANS OF SPREADING THE WORD, AND BECAUSE SOME TREKKERS ARE GONE SO LONG THAT, PRIOR TO ARRIVAL IN BOA VISTA, THEY WOULD IN ANY CASE OUTRUN THE VALIDITY OF VENEZUELAN VISAS ISSUED IN THE U.S., WE FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT THE DEPARTMENT INFORM ALL LATIN AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS OF THE OUTLINES OF THIS PROBLEM, AND THAT IT REQUEST CONSULAR OFFICERS TO ADVISE TRAVELLERS TO APPLY FOR VENEZUELAN VISAS "FURTHER UP THE TRAIL" BEFORE THEY BOX THEMSELVES IN AT BOA VISTA. VISA ISSUANCE ELSEWHERE MAY WELL PROVE EASIER, GIVEN THE DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES INVOLVED AND THE LACK OF IMMEDIATE INVOLVEMENT AND CONCERN FOR FRONTIER PROBLEMS. MOREOVER, EVEN IF OTHER VENEZUELAN POSTS SIMILARLY INSIST ON PRIOR TELEX CLEARANCE, THE LOCAL SURROUNDINGS, BE IT LIMA, BUEOS AIRES, RIO, BRASILIA, ETC., WILL IN MOST CASES ASSURE A FAR MORE PLEASANT SOJOURN THAN IS TO BE HAD IN BOA VISTA. ONE OR TWO WEEKS THERE IS NOBODY'S IDEA OF A GOOD TIME, PARTICULARLY IF THE WAIT IN THE END PROVES FRUITLESS.

CRIMMINS

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PAGE 03 BRASIL 06119 02 OF 02 131843Z

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